

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 SP-02 PM-05 AID-05 NSC-05
SS-15 SSO-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
INRE-00 ACDA-07 PRS-01 /068 R

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NEA:SSOBER
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S/S-FRANK WISNER

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O 262150Z AUG 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 204910

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDIT, ET, SO, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MENGISTU

REF: A) ADDIS ABABA 4864, B) STATE 191143

1. DEPARTMENT HAS FOLLOWED CLOSELY VARIOUS INDICATIONS
OUTLINED IN REF A THAT MENGISTU DESIRES BETTER RELATIONS
WITH US. WE AGREE THAT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO DETERMINE
IF ETHIOPIANS REALLY WANT BETTER RELATIONS OR IF THEY ARE
JUST MAKING SHORT-TERM PITCH FOR SUPPORT AT A TIME WHEN
THEIR DEFENSE LINES ARE CRUMBLING. DEPARTMENT'S SKEPTICISM
RE INTENTIONS OF EPMG IS REINFORCED BY EVIDENCE THAT ISRAELI
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PRODDING RATHER THAN HIS OWN CHANGE OF HEART MAY HAVE MOTI-
VATED MENGISTU'S AUGUST 4 SUMMONS TO YOU. WHATEVER THE
IMPETUS BEHIND THE OPENING TO US, WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS UP
TO THE ETHIOPIANS TO PROVIDE CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF A DESIRE
FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS. MENGISTU'S AUGUST 4 RECITAL NOT-
WITHSTANDING, WE CONSIDER OURSELVES TO BE THE AGGRIEVED
PARTY IN RECENT RELATIONSHIP. FURTHERMORE, ETHIOPIANS ARE

THE PARTY IN SERIOUS TROUBLE TODAY.

2. NONETHELESS, WE FEEL THAT MENGISTU'S RECENT OVERTURES AND THE CESSATION OF ANTI-US PROPAGANDA GIVE US GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP A POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH EPMG ALIVE. ACCORDINGLY, YOU SHOULD SEEK A MEETING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

WITH MENGISTU. ETHIOPIAN RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST WILL, IN ITSELF, SERVE AS AN INITIAL TEST OF THE SINCERITY OF THEIR OVERTURES. IT IS A STEP WORTH TAKING EVEN IF ONLY TO KEEP EPMG OFF BALANCE AND TO FEED THEIR QUESTIONING OF WISDOM OF SWITCH FROM US TO USSR. WE ASSUME THAT KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR MEETINGS WITH MENGISTU WILL BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE IN ADDIS ABABA AND BELIEVE THAT WILL LEND WEIGHT TO OUR EFFORT.

3. IN YOUR MEETING, YOU SHOULD INFORM MENGISTU THAT OUR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO PROVIDE SOMALIA DEFENSIVE ARMS AID WAS MADE AT A TIME WHEN INSURGENCY IN THE OGADEN WAS AT A LOW LEVEL. THE ESCALATED FIGHTING IN THE OGADEN HAS CHANGED THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE ORIGINAL DECISION HAD BEEN MADE. WHILE OUR AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE STILL STANDS, HE SHOULD REALIZE THAT WE HAVE NO INTENTION TO MOVE FORWARD WITH ITS IMPLEMENTATION WHILE THE OGADEN IS IN FLAMES. WE HOPE THAT OAU MEDIATION WILL BEAR FRUIT, THAT THE FIGHTING WILL END, AND THAT AN ENDURING SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE CAN BE REACHED. YOU SHOULD POINT OUT TO HIM THAT THIS IS US
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POLICY PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED AT THE AUGUST 10 STATE DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING (REF B). YOU MAY ADD THAT PRESS SPOKESMAN REITERATED THAT WE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORT OAU PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ITS MEMBER STATES. MENGISTU SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE REFRAINING FROM SUPPLYING ARMS TO SOMALIA NOW PRECISELY BECAUSE WE DO NOT WISH TO BECOME INVOLVED ON EITHER SIDE IN DISPUTE BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA. IN CONTRAST, WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVES OF AN OUTSIDE POWER WHICH CONTINUES TO SUPPLY BOTH SIDES OF AN INTER-AFRICAN CONFLICT.

4. YOU SHOULD NOTE OUR PLEASURE THAT EPMG, AFTER LONG PERIOD OF AVOIDING NEW STARTS IN US AID PROGRAM, HAS NOW GIVEN GREEN LIGHT TO PROCEED WITH THREE NEW PROJECTS. WE WELCOME THIS AS EVIDENCE THAT EPMG NOW VIEWS US AS LEGITIMATE PARTNER IN PURSUING GOALS OF ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION WHICH RELATE DIRECTLY TO IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVELS OF THE ORDINARY CITIZENS OF ETHIOPIA. WE HAVE LONG BEEN INTERESTED IN HELPING TO ALLEVIATE HUMAN WANT AND SUFFERING IN ETHIOPIA AS ELSEWHERE. IN THAT CONNECTION, IF THE EPMG SEES WAYS IN WHICH WE COULD HELP TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING RESULTING FROM THE OGADEN CONFLICT, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO

CONSIDER PROPOSALS TO THAT END.

5. YOU SHOULD TELL MENGISTU DEPARTMENT IS INTERESTED IN HIS PROPOSAL TO SEND AN AMBASSADOR HERE. IT WOULD BE TAKEN AS A DEMONSTRATIVE SIGN OF EPMG'S INTEREST IN MORE NORMAL RELATIONS AS THERE HAS BEEN NO ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR HERE SINCE FEBRUARY 10, 1975 AND THE ETHIOPIAN EMBASSY HAS RECENTLY BEEN IN THE CHARGE OF A THIRD SECRETARY. WHEN OUR RELATIONSHIP HAS STABILIZED, WE WILL, AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME IN THE FUTURE, WISH TO RETURN TO A NORMAL CONDUCT OF BILATERAL AFFAIRS BY NAMING AN AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA. FYI. WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO TAKE THIS STEP NOW. END FYI.

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6. IF MENGISTU RAISES POSSIBILITY OF RESUMPTION IN US MILITARY SUPPLIES TO ETHIOPIA, YOU SHOULD TELL HIM THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES US IS NOT PREPARED TO RESUME MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP. IF HE ASKS FOR EXPLANATION OF PHRASE "PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES," YOU SHOULD SAY THAT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS DO NOT ELABORATE ON THIS POINT. WE HOPE HE WILL NOT RAISE ISSUE AND THAT YOUR FAILURE TO RAISE IT WILL PROVIDE TACIT RESPONSE TO HIS FEELERS. CHRISTOPHER

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